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The mission of Hospicare & Palliative Care Services is to bring medical expertise and compassionate, respectful care to people and their loved ones at any stage of a life-threatening illness and to provide information and education about advanced illness, dying and bereavement to the entire community.

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SHERYL D. SINKOW

Message from the Director

The Links That Keep Us Strong

If someone asked you to explain what Hospicare is, you might respond by saying it's a not-for profit organization or a healthcare agency—and you would be right. Hospicare can be described that way, but it is also so much more.

The fact is that Hospicare, like every human services organization, is best defined as a network—a deeply integrated and complicated web of people, resources and ideas. Our

real value, and the aspect of Hospicare that means the most to our community, is not our aggregation of buildings, equipment, computers and other material assets. It is our links, at multiple levels and with varying degrees of intensity, with hundreds of people and dozens of other organizations. It is the ideas and values that animate the work we do and that produce the positive effects we have on the people and community we serve. In an increasingly interconnected world, this network is crucial to our mission to provide professional, compassionate care to our friends and neighbors at the end of life.

The articles in this issue of the newsletter show how our interconnectedness with so many aspects of our community supports Hospicare's work. As the Women Swimmin' wrap-up article on page 3 makes clear, the hundreds of swimmers, boaters and other volunteers who join together to make this important fundraising event a success are an integral part of that network. Some may work for a few hours the morning of the swim; others may put in hundreds of volunteer hours to help organize and implement the event. But all of them contribute to the network that ensures the success of Women Swimmin'—and thereby enhance the success of Hospicare's mission. The sheer number of participants, and the single focus they share, has an immense impact on Hospicare's overall network. Our connections to supporters, donors and most of all to our patients and their families, are stronger and more powerful because of their efforts.

Our center spread article about Hospicare supporter Nancy Compese, pages 4-5, shows how Hospicare's network evolves over time. Nancy has had many roles during her relationship with Hospicare. She has been a swimmer, a primary caregiver to an ill family member and now an ambassador for the agency. In each of those roles Nancy has strengthened and broadened the reach, effectiveness and richness of the Hospicare network. And as I'm sure Nancy will agree, her willingness to commit to this agency comes from the impact Hospicare has had in her life. That impact was only made possible by the earlier commitment of hundreds of other community members who, together, helped create the interconnectedness that makes Hospicare as vibrant and as valued as it is today.



Dale Johnson



On the cover: The funds raised by Women Swimmin' for Hospicare recently made it possible for us to fulfill patient Rasa Seager's wish to continue her love of gardening. Our gardeners provided raised beds surrounded by pavers that made it possible for Rasa to garden from her wheelchair. Because of our fundraisin' swimmers, she and her husband, Bruce, were able to spend many happy afternoons surrounded by the plants they love.

Cover photo by: Melissa Travis Dunham

Photo Credits Page 3

Top Row (L-R): Joe Wilensky, Michelle Turek

Middle Row (L-R): Nathalie Rateau, Frank Leahy, Frank Leahy, Joe Wilensky

Bottom Row (L-R): Joe Wilensky, Joe Wilensky, Frank Leahy

Women Swimmin' 2017

Swimming to Celebrate Life

BY MELISSA TRAVIS DUNHAM



The posters, buttons and t-shirts for this year's Women Swimmin' for Hospicare proudly proclaimed, "I swim to celebrate life." At its very core, that is what hospice is all about. Hospicare's mission is to give terminally ill people the help they need to live their lives as fully as possible for however much time is left.

Your support of Women Swimmin' contributes greatly to meeting the needs of each patient and their family. Because of you, Hospicare can provide a caring, respectful community where patients and families can focus on celebrating a life, instead of struggling to provide care. Thanks to the women who swam across the lake or swam laps all summer, the boaters and volunteers who supported them, and the thousands of donors around the world who helped them reach their fundraising goals, we are able to offer hospice and palliative care to everyone in our community, regardless of whether they have insurance or means to pay.

It never fails to amaze us how our community comes together to make Women

Swimmin' happen. This summer the unprecedented reports of harmful algae blooms in Cayuga Lake brought some extra challenges. We were impressed and uplifted by the response and collaboration of many local organizations and individuals: The Tompkins County Health Department and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation offered recommendations and expertise to help us understand how to safely proceed with the swim. The staff and volunteers at the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and the Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom provided guidance and encouragement, and also surveyed the lake for us in the days and hour before the swim to ensure there were no harmful algae blooms present.

We extend a special thanks to the businesses who covered all event expenses, so that 100 percent of the money raised by swimmers and boaters will go toward patient and family services. Thanks to our host, Ithaca Yacht Club; Ithaca Bakery and Collegetown Bagels for donating a

nourishing breakfast; Maguire Family of Dealerships; our media sponsors Cayuga Radio Group, *Ithaca Child* and *Tompkins Weekly*; our corporate sponsors: 15 STEPS; BorgWarner; Cayuga Medical Center; CSP Management; Dermatology Associates of Ithaca; Insero & Co.; Miller Mayer, LLP; Morgan Stanley; OB-GYN & Midwifery Associates of Ithaca; Satori Day Spa and Salon; The Computing Center; Tompkins Insurance Agencies, Inc. and Tompkins Trust Company. Thanks also to Puddledockers—for the eighth year in a row—for donating a fabulous kayak, plus accessories, for our raffle. We are also grateful to the numerous businesses that underwrote some of the expenses or provided logistical support. To see the full list of sponsors and underwriters, visit womenswimmin.org.

Thank you to everyone who joined us to celebrate life with Women Swimmin'. Your generosity allows Hospicare & Palliative Care Services to keep our promise to provide end-of-life care and bereavement support to all in our community who need our help.

Appreciating Hospicare's Support

BY JACKIE SWIFT



Long before Nancy Compose ever needed Hospicare's services for herself or a loved one, she felt a pull toward the organization. She attended Women Swimmin', Hospicare's main fundraising event, with a friend in 2008. The next year, she decided



to participate as a swimmer and has swum every year since. She enjoys the challenge of swimming the 1.2 miles across Cayuga Lake to raise money for Hospicare. "It's a remarkable event," Nancy says. "That first year, I swam in memory of my Dad. When my husband died and then my mother, I swam in memory of them as well. I feel empowered by doing something worthwhile and positive for such a good cause."

In the years since her first swim, Nancy has experienced Hospicare's services firsthand. In early 2017, her mother, Jackie Bucher, suffered breathing problems and then a three-week hospitalization for flu and pneumonia that made it impossible for her to return to the level of independence she'd enjoyed in her assisted living facility. "She began to talk about the end of a life-well-lived," Nancy remembers. "It was a difficult and strange conversation to have with my mother, but when she said she did not want to ever again go through what she did during those three weeks in the hospital, I realized, based on her wishes, that it was time to think about palliative care."

Jackie moved into Bridges Cornell Heights and went on hospice services. As a Hospicare patient in a nursing facility, Jackie received visits as necessary from a team of Hospicare professionals, including her primary nurse, Amanda McLaughlin, RN; Mishi Turner, home health aide; Edie Regan, LMSW, M.Div, spiritual care coordinator; Sara Speiser, LCSW, social worker; and professionally trained volunteers. "Mom and I were blessed to have that ongoing support for five weeks while she was at Bridges," Nancy says. "Mom did quite well for awhile, but she accepted that her end was near. As she used to say to me, 'The people who help with death and dying were here today.'"

During Jackie's last week of life, her breathing issues became more difficult to manage. Nancy began to stay overnight at Bridges to assist the staff there in caring for her mother. "It was very overwhelming," Nancy says. "I was grateful for the phone call saying that Hospicare had a spot for Mom at the Residence."

Jackie moved into a room at the Nina K. Miller Hospicare Residence the next day. While Nancy spoke with spiritual care staff

and began to fill out paperwork, Residence staff cared for Jackie, administering medication and talking with her. She eventually fell into a restful sleep. "Mom died just after midnight that night," Nancy says. "The Residence staff provided continuous comfort to her and to my family. I didn't realize her time at the facility would be so short, but I was incredibly grateful that she was able to spend her last few hours in a peaceful sleep surrounded by her children. She was so at peace that my sister and I weren't even sure she'd taken her last breath, until the nurse came in and checked her."

During her mother's time as a Hospicare patient, Nancy saw the value of calling Hospicare sooner rather than later. "There is a perception that Hospicare can only help people who are terminally ill in the very last days of their lives," she says.



"This is why people are afraid to call about hospice services. It's difficult to accept death or even to talk about it. But Hospicare staff are uniquely trained to provide the attentive support—medically, emotionally and spiritually—that we all want and need for our ill loved one and for their caregiver."

Nancy is especially appreciative of the



With Hospicare's support, Jackie Bucher was able to spend her last days as she had always lived—surrounded by her family.

support Hospicare provided to her, as the primary caregiver. When her father had died in 1988, she witnessed how a Las Vegas hospice helped him have a peaceful death, but her mother had been the primary caregiver in that situation and Nancy had been unaware of the availability of additional help for family members. Then, some years later, Nancy had nursed her husband through a lingering illness without the help of hospice. Now, Nancy found that the assistance Hospicare gave her was beyond what she had imagined. "In this situation, I think Hospicare was more valuable to me, personally," she says. "I needed help keeping my mother company, keeping her spirits up and mine, too, and I needed help monitoring her health and care. I had spent 15 years caring for my husband without much support, never knowing where I could turn for it."

Although Nancy's husband died in 2014 without using hospice, after his death Nancy's doctor told her about Hospicare's community bereavement services, which are available to anyone grieving a loss in Cortland or Tompkins counties. Nancy met with Donna George, LMSW, FT, manager of bereavement services, in one-on-one sessions and attended bereavement support group meetings. "For almost three years now I have been grateful for the emotional support and the lifelong friendships I have developed through Hospicare's bereavement services," she says. "During the grief process it's helpful to read the recommended



"Hospicare helps you live and love life."



literature and to listen to others speak about their experiences in group meetings. It helps to talk out loud in a non-judgmental place about what you are experiencing, to mourn with others, and to recognize that what you are feeling is similar to what others who are going through the grief process are experiencing, too. Hospicare goes far beyond helping people and their loved ones during the

final stages of life. They support individuals, too, who are in the process of grieving the loss of a loved one. If I'd been more knowledgeable about Hospicare's services when my husband was ill, I would have reached out to them sooner."

Nancy now sees herself as an advocate for Hospicare in the community. "It's my goal to help spread the word that Hospicare offers more than support for the terminally ill," she says. "They help you to live and love life. This organization truly relies on the fundraising our community can provide. I feel a commitment to honor and support them because of all the help and support they have provided to me."

Staff Profile: Laura Ward, LMFT

Supporting the Bereaved on Their Grief Journey

BY JACKIE SWIFT



JEFF COLLINS

Residence: Ithaca

Family: Wife, Amy, who is a nurse practitioner; 9-year-old triplet daughters Addy, Bay and Kai; a corgi named Fredrick; a cat named Stella; and a fish named Ziggy Stardust

Pastimes: Travel, hiking gorges, running, listening to podcasts, reading, puzzles, fires in the fireplace, board games, hanging out with friends

Motto: Be the change you wish to see in the world.

Years on Staff: 3 years

“Grief is a natural process. It’s not a problem to be fixed,” says Laura Ward, LMFT, Hospicare bereavement counselor. “I meet people at a time when they really need support and need to be heard and understood. It’s a big honor to be there for them at that point in their lives.”

Bereavement support is offered to all patients and their families as part of Hospicare’s services. In her role as bereavement counselor, Laura makes follow-up phone calls to family members of patients after their loved one dies. She meets one-on-one with them, if they desire, and she also leads some of the Hospicare grief support groups. In addition, Laura is the primary counselor for children and teens whose loved

one has died on Hospicare’s services. “When there’s a child in a Hospicare patient’s family, I am the counselor that child sees if they need one-on-one counseling,” she says. “Or I might work with the family, offering resources like children’s books about death and information on child grief. I’ve been in family meetings, too, where a child was involved—sometimes the patient may be in those meetings as well. The purpose is to help prepare the child or help them process what they are feeling before the death happens.”

Along with bereavement support for Hospicare patients and families, Laura also provides bereavement help to community members suffering a loss. She has led group meetings that are open to both the loved ones of Hospicare patients and to community members, she responds to community requests from individuals, schools and others for help on how to support bereaved children, and she plans the child-centered special workshops that are open to all grieving children in the community. She’s especially proud of the collaboration she started a few years ago with The Clay School of Ithaca. “Every fall we have a workshop where the children make memory boxes out of clay,” she says. “It’s a great way to be with other kids who are grieving. There’s a fun component, and there’s

"I meet people at a time when they really need support and need to be heard and understood."

time to share about the memory box they’ve made. It’s been a very successful event!”

Counseling the bereaved has influenced how Laura views the world and the importance of human connections. “I love people’s stories and their relationships,” she says. “That’s the best part of life, so I really enjoy hearing about the life people have had with their loved one and the life that person lived. It’s a constant reminder to me of what’s important: people, relationships. When I’m in the room talking to a person about the love they have for someone else, the most beautiful parts of life are there in the sadness.”

Laura calls the work she does “companionship.” She is present in the moment, supporting the bereaved person as they process their loss and move to a place where they can integrate their deceased loved one into their current life. “A lot of times people come into grief counseling focused on what happened during the death of their loved one and the illness that led up to it,” Laura says. “They don’t feel they can grasp the happy memories. It’s wonderful to see them shift and come to a place of reflection, a place where they integrate what they learned from that person into their life. It’s really special to be there with them on that journey.”

Investing in the Health of Our Community

When Renee's terminally ill brother, Thomas, came to live with Renee and her husband, Stewart, they were overwhelmed and at a loss about how to meet Thomas's needs. A friend mentioned hospice, and Renee quickly contacted Hospicare. The Hospicare team became Renee and Stewart's partners in caring for Thomas. They helped to manage his pain and symptoms, and coordinated his medical care. A home health aide assisted Thomas with his personal care, and trained volunteers provided additional support, giving Renee and Stewart the chance to spend quality family time with Thomas.

"We experienced firsthand the love and care that Hospicare staff provided in ensuring a death with dignity for my brother, and peace and comfort for our family," says Renee. "His last breath embodied his gentle spirit and our entire extended family felt deeply complete."

Renee is now an enthusiastic supporter of Hospicare. "We know that the services our family received wouldn't exist without community volunteers and financial support from donors," she says. "We now think that supporting hospice is our responsibility and an incredible investment in the health of our community. You don't have to be rich to make a substantial gift to Hospicare. You can remember them in a way that isn't complicated or expensive."

We are grateful to Renee and Stewart for their support. By choosing to leave Hospicare a gift from your estate, as they have, you too can help ensure that terminally ill community members have the chance for a better end-of-life experience and that their loved ones will receive the help they need. Every donation to Hospicare assists us in providing quality care and bereavement services, and helps us plan the stability of our services over time.

To find out how to leave your legacy by supporting Hospicare, or for specific language for your documents, contact Shawn Galbreath at 607-272-0212, or email her at sgalbreath@hospicare.org.



PHOTOS BY MICHELLE TUREK

2017 Hospicare Honor Awards

Top left: On behalf of the Small Comforts Foundation Ltd., Candy Cima receives the Dr. R. Roy Coats Compassionate Care Award from Loren Gardner, Hospicare board president.

Left: Chuck Guttman (center) receives the Hospicare Volunteer Honor from Dale Johnson, Hospicare executive director, and Nina Miller, former Hospicare executive director.

Top right: Amy Dickinson gives the key note address at the Awards Luncheon on October 5.



Your Legacy Is Priceless to Hospicare

A planned gift is a powerful expression of your dreams, ideals and principles. It reaches beyond your lifetime to touch the lives of future generations. By supporting Hospicare's mission and programs, your charitable legacy is the most effective and meaningful way to safeguard compassionate, high-quality end-of-life care for the body, mind and spirit.

An important part of our income comes from gifts left to Hospicare in community members' wills. By designating to our endowment fund in your will, you can create a lasting legacy for the future. Ask your attorney how to establish a planned gift if you would like to help Hospicare in this way, or contact Hospicare's development office.

For more information on how to include Hospicare in your will, please contact us, in confidence, by calling 607-272-0212. Our Federal Tax ID number is 22-2473715.

Welcome to Our New Volunteers

The following volunteers completed volunteer training in 2017 and are, or soon will be, actively volunteering.

Please welcome: Bob Bittner, Eileen Bunce, Betty Bortz, Jenny Caldwell, Lauren Coffey, Anne Garretson, Jamie Hazard, Beverly Johnson, Kim Keery, Mary Kay LaLonde, Marilyn Lamoreau, Vladlena Lee, Danielle Olonoff, Angela Rozzoni, Barbara Ryan, Mark Stuart, Laurie Williams and Paula Winner.



Did You Know?

Hospice provides help and support for the whole family, not just the patient.

Our newsletter is mailed twice a year to patients and family members, donors, community supporters and other friends of Hospicare. If you have received multiple copies of this newsletter, please let us know so we can correct the mailing error. In addition, we welcome your thoughts or feedback about the contents. Contact us at communications@hospicare.org. This newsletter is also available online at hospicare.org/newsletters.



Join Us for Winter Solace

“Grief is like a snowflake . . . sometimes it comes one flake at a time; other times it comes like a blizzard. It melts away, but always comes back. Just as each snowflake is unique, each person experiences grief in their own way.”

—Julia Cook, *Grief Is Like a Snowflake*

Hospicare invites you to our annual Winter Solace memorial event and fundraiser to support you, your family, neighbors, friends and coworkers who may be grieving the loss of a loved one at this time of year. Festive lights outside will adorn the Hospicare grounds, and a memorial board will display the names of those being remembered.

Winter Solace will take place Sunday, December 3, 3:00–5:00 p.m., in the Great Room of the Nina K. Miller Hospicare Center in Ithaca. There will be refreshments throughout the event and welcoming

remarks from Hospicare staff beginning at 4:00. All in our community who are grieving are welcome, regardless of whether your loved one died on Hospicare’s services. Come for the full two hours, or stop in for a few moments of remembrance during the busy holiday season.

Your support of the Hospicare mission is truly appreciated. To make a donation to Winter Solace in memory or in honor of a loved one, visit hospicare.org/wintersolace or call 607-272-0212.



Find more articles and information on hospice and palliative care on our website at hospicare.org
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